

all kinship and social organization can be checked, material culture is tangible if enough survives, but religion of this sort could never have been gotten properly without a mass of detailed evidence, without say a hundred visions of fathers and sons, and material on what they did with them. . . .

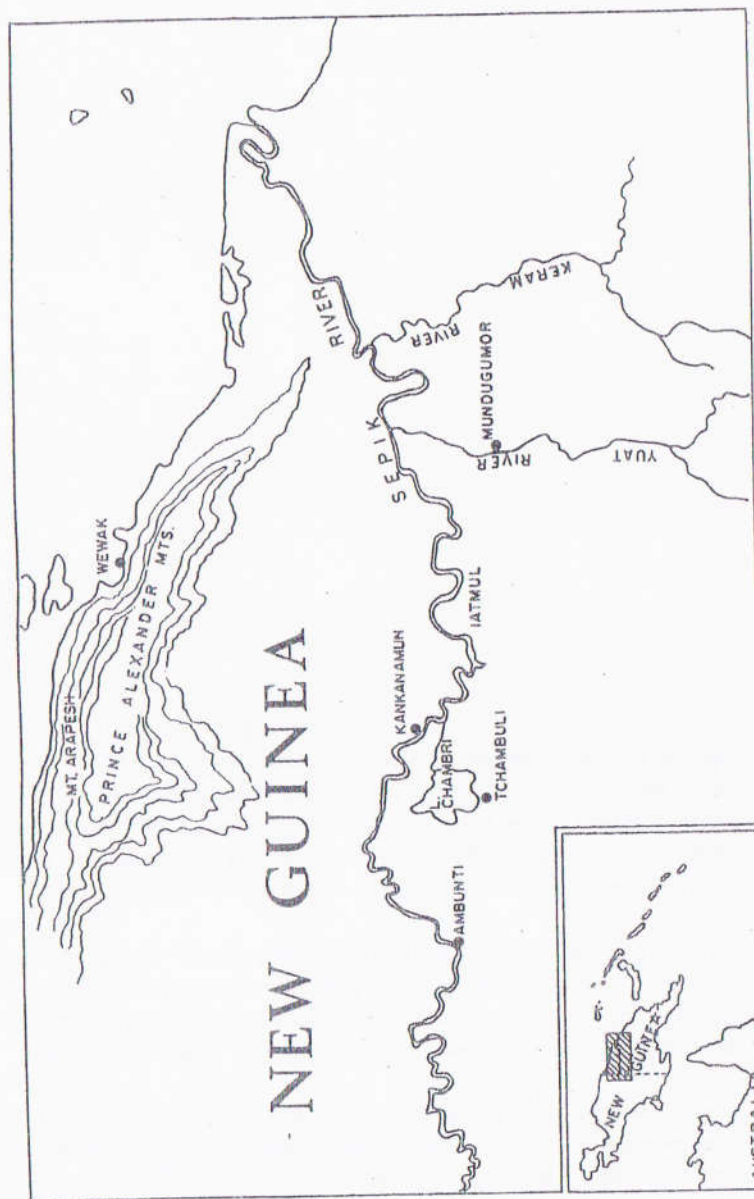
Later. More light. Gilmore has been here, financed by Heye, and paid \$50 a bundle, insisting on having song and vision. He refused to buy a bundle without the song and vision, so they reckon it is valuable. Now could you see if that information is recorded at the Heye Museum. . . .

Don't think I am a thankless wretch, please. And scold me if you think I still deserve it and am overestimating the difficulties. It costs \$100 here to join Peyote. Do you think that is worth doing? It seems dull. We've seen the peyote death ritual. I feel as if I had no sense of values left, when I try to evaluate this work. It has rained after a month's drought. That is one of the mercies.

part four

*New Guinea—
Arapesh,
Mundugumor and
Tchambuli,
1931–1933*

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When we returned from our short field trip to the Omaha, I wrote *The Changing Culture of an Indian Tribe* and Reo wrote *Omaha Secret Societies* and the first draft of *Manus Religion*. We intended to leave for New Guinea in the spring of 1931, but just at that time a review of *Growing Up in New Guinea* appeared in the *Saturday Review of Literature*, in which it was alleged that I did not know the Manus kinship system. This so angered me that I decided to postpone our field trip until I had written "Kinship in the Admiralty Islands," which was the most detailed monograph on kinship published up to that time.

As my field funds came from the Frederick F. Voss Anthropological and Archeological Fund of the American Museum of Natural History, I could state my field expectations very broadly, instead of narrowly specifying a research problem, as in the past. What I planned was research on the way sex roles are stylized in different cultures, as a necessary prerequisite to any study of innate biological differences between the sexes. And this time I expected to include the whole life cycle, beginning with birth.

In September 1931 we were able to set out from New York.

Our initial choice for a field site was the Plains people, later called

the Abelam, about two days' walk inland from the northeast coast of New Guinea, across the Torricelli range. We had seen pictures of the splendid ceremonial houses and we hoped for an elaborate culture. But the carriers recruited by Reo on his first trip inland from Karawop plantation all came from the villages across the mountains and they refused to carry our equipment and supplies beyond the mountain village of Alitoa, among a people we later called the Mountain Arapesh. So we found ourselves with an exceedingly simple culture, one in which the personality and roles of men and women alike were stylized as parental, cherishing and mildly sexed.

For the second part of the trip we decided to go up the Sepik River and choose the first group off the river on the first tributary above the Keram River, where Richard Thurnwald had worked before World War I. This proved to be the group on the Yuat River we called the Mundugumor, about whom we had no ethnographic information. Although they had very recently come under government control, theirs was already a broken culture. But they provided a contrast to the Mountain Arapesh for, while men and women were expected to display like personality traits, they were stylized as fiercely aggressive, highly sexed and noncherishing of children.

At this point I felt I was getting nowhere with my principal inquiry, although many other fascinating problems were emerging. Fortunately, we still had several months' field money and we finally selected a site on Tchambuli Lake, where I found a revealing reversal of the expected personality of the two sexes. The women were brisk, businesslike and cooperative and they dressed up the men and the children; the men were catty, exhibitionistic and preoccupied with decorative and artistic activities.

Gregory Bateson was working in the Iatmul village of Kankanamun and, intermittently, in Aibaum on Tchambuli Lake. Iatmul men were active, dominating and proud, while the women were shy, meek and responsive.

The combination of these several findings provided me with the theme of *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*, a discussion of the way temperament transcends sex and different societies empha-

size the same or contrasting temperaments as the basis of the expected personalities of women and men.

At the end of this field trip we each went our separate way. I returned to the United States and the Museum. Reo Fortune went to the London School of Economics. Gregory Bateson returned to Cambridge.

Alitoa

January 15, 1932

Our itinerary was as follows: New York to Panama, Panama to New Zealand, New Zealand to Sydney, Sydney to Madang, where we had to change boats and stayed with the District Officer. Then from Madang to Wewak, up the Sepik River as far as Marienberg, sleeping one night amid the cannibal mosquitoes. Then a week at the government station in Wewak, reading reports and making maps. Then by pinnace to Karawop, a plantation owned by the Cobbs. He is an Englishman, a Leeds University man trained as a wool buyer and now making the best of the price of copra by recruiting.

I stayed there while Reo went inland to scout about. The chances of getting our stuff moved in looked very poor. The country is mountainous, there are only native trails, running up perpendicular cliffs or along the beds of streams. The natives have practically everything they need of white goods, knives, blankets, kettles. They cannot be compelled to carry, and they don't like carrying. Reo was pretty hopeless at first, but he went about from one village to another, unearthing their darkest secrets which they wished kept from the government, and then ordered them to come and carry. This for some villages, and the others came by contagion. Reo came back to the Cobbs' not knowing whether any carriers would turn up or not, but the next day 87 came. In all it took about 250 to get our stuff up here to Alitoa, which is three days from Wewak, the government station, and two days from the Cobbs'. Mr. Cobb lent us six strong boys from his plantation line to carry me in. We had brought one of those string hammocks and they strung it on a pole and laced me, with banana leaves over me to keep out the sun

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and rain, for all the world like a pig. It was a little sea-sickish being handed up and down some of the mountains, but it was a great improvement on walking.

Reo had only been in this village overnight. He had made a speech telling them that he approved of all their old customs and that if we came to live here the village would always be full of matches and salt—the two great desiderata. So they said we could build a house and Reo marked out a place the right size in the spot they assigned to us and told them to build a house. Then he left a boy in charge of all our stores, piled up in two natives' houses, and came down to get me. We didn't have any idea whether we would find a house here or not, but when we got here they had the framework up and the floor down, a big fence about the whole open space, and the village paths were spread with sago-leaf thatch shingles. We lived in a native house for a week while they finished the house.

The way they built the house was amusing but difficult to follow. At least 100 men, most of them from surrounding villages, must have come in and done a little work, put up a post or put on a bit of thatch, and then drifted away, often never to return and claim any remuneration. If one went to the house at hour intervals one found entirely new faces among the workers. No one supervised, although there was one man, the *tutul* (man with the government hat, who is official interpreter), who had helped to build at the government station. He did the skilled jobs, but as far as directing the work, he would only remark vaguely: "We need more light wood." Then in half a day or so if no one had got any, he would go off himself and get some. We contributed half a bag of rice, on condition that they send carriers down to bring up a whole bag, and our shoot-boy finally shot a pig in the nick of time. This was for the big feast the day of the thatching. Then all those who had worked for three days got a knife. The house complete with big veranda, center room, bedroom, storeroom and cook-house cost, at the present rate of exchange, about ten dollars. We are now moved in and very comfortable. At night it is cool enough to sleep under two blankets and it is never unbearably hot. Our big door looks out on a high mountain across a steep valley. . . .

Salt is our chief currency. We can buy ten sweet potatoes for a

tablespoon of salt and their appreciation of salted food is strong enough to make salt good currency day after day. They will walk two days to trade a big bag of taro or four mud-hen eggs for tinned meat or fish. And they are hospitable to a degree—easy, unexact, not keeping careful count of food given and received. Each village has a *time hungry*, but it varies from village to village and one can always borrow. They are very quiet and unaggressive, laughter and a sort of lilting shout are the most frequent sounds. We are right in the village, in a fenced-in spot between two divisions of the village, but often it is as quiet as the grave. The night they finished building our house everybody went off to their farms and there were only three families left in the village. It is an excellent place to work on the language without too much pressure of people and consequent interruption.

The language is the most complicated thing about these people. It has eleven genders and twenty-two third-person pronouns and a different set of numerals for each gender, and the plural of at least half the words is completely irregular and unguessable. If you use the wrong adjective ending, they just look blank and refuse to supply your meaning for you. You have to learn the whole grammar before you dare say more than a few words. However, the people seem to have exhausted all their inventive capacity upon the language. They have big House Tambarans (men's ceremonial houses) and initiation ceremonies sometimes; but if they don't feel like having them, they just circumcise a boy or two casually.

If this letter sounds rather scrappy it is because I am writing it in intervals in linguistic work when Jack (our linguistic boy and boss-boy) goes off to chew betel nut or a boy comes in to tell Reo that there is a pigeon on a nearby tree. Our boys object to having their own names shouted through the village and so insist upon white names. So permit me to introduce Jack, large, opulent, tireless, intelligent, always preening his feathers but preening them with reason, endlessly good-humored in the face of being asked to pronounce the same word twenty times. It takes a good nature and patience to stand being asked first for a word, then for its plural, and then to say: "I see it" and "I see them"—which has to be done for every noun to determine all its forms. Jack is also boss-boy, chief carpenter and general factotum. He



In Alitua, houses and palms crowd together on the mountain ridge.

has a fine animal lustiness which, combined with intelligence, is very pleasing and he is a delight to work with after our sullen little Manus schoolboy.

Next in age and rank of the houseboys is Tommy. He is married to a small solemn-eyed child of ten or eleven who is, it appears, but not clearly, his wife in name only. He ploughs his way vaguely through his tasks and provided there is nothing new or unusual about them does quite well.

Then there is my small *monkey*, Billy, a delicate little boy whom Reo sent me at Karawop, where he became tremendously impressed with the rituals of bed-making and table-setting. We like to eat on the open veranda, which is too cold for the natives, so I have fashioned Billy a smart jacket from an old cotton flannel pajama top. He walks cat-footed about the table, a necessary skill on the uneven, shifting



Our house in Alitua. After the feast for the house, the women bid us goodbye while the men still are thatching the roof.

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An Arapesh garden ready for planting.

floor of split flattened-out logs. But the minute he gets two paces away he streaks for the house-cook like a frightened rabbit. He had never seen a white establishment until a month ago and the pains he has to take to set a table correctly are almost equivalent to our remembering a set of Chinese syllables.

Furthermore, there is Harry, a happy, humorous fool, who runs errands and fetches things from the bush. And a dour shoot-boy, Yabinigi, who is here because he is fed up with his two wives, and Gerud, a *monkey* who can't talk Pidgin, but who is handsome and obedient. Verily a houseful and all obsessed by food. Quarrels over the best part of the cockatoo are the only storms which disturb their rather noisy unanimity.

It's going to be an excellent place to study the genesis of "gender

consciousness" (a phrase coined by a lady reporter in Sydney), for the emphasis upon sex difference begins in the cradle—baby girls are decked out in earrings and necklaces, while boys wear no ornaments until almost grown. Little girls of four and five strut and flirt. The women do all the carrying, the weeding, the cooking and have to all appearances a hard life, but they are attractive, valued and conscious of being valued. Shut out from the religion, from magic and from the social life of the men, they nevertheless seem to maintain a firm sense of importance, and it is a sight to see a young woman swish her way across a village square where all the elders have been orating vigorously upon some affair of state. There is menstrual and birth segregation, also. But although the women are formally excluded from the House Tambaran and such, a man spends about two-thirds of his time alone on his farm with his wife or wives and their children, so family life is well developed. Husbands and wives talk pleasantly together in the sight of the village. One man was so pleased when his wife came back that he embraced her in public. The people commented and laughed; that was all. The most frequent cause of women running away is if one wife is offended with another or doubts her welcome; the husband doesn't figure largely.

Alitoa

February 12, 1932

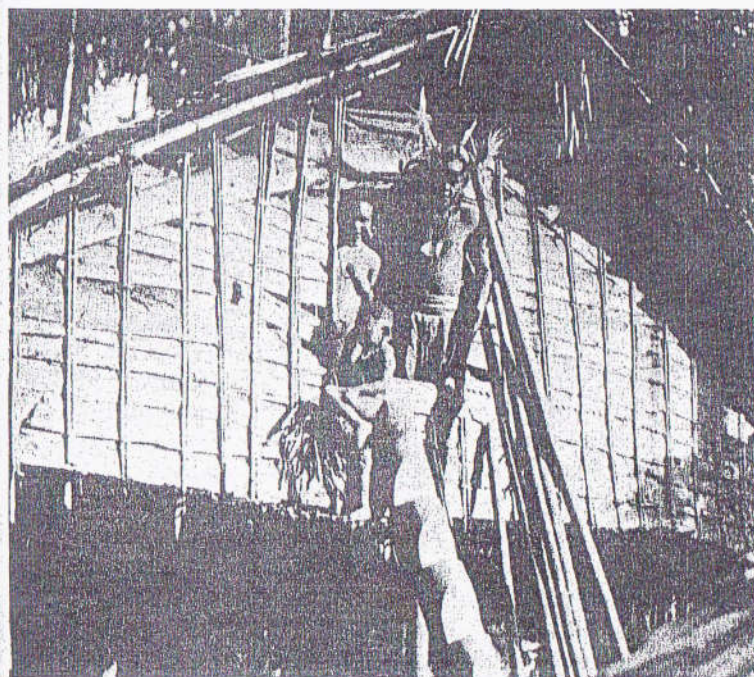
It's pleasant being in the midst of the "big bush," which comes right up to our back door and in its insect form flies in the door. Butterflies and dragonflies drift in and out of the house and occasionally a bird gets ambushed in the rafters. The birds call rather than sing, a long series of plaintive, inquiring notes which begin before dawn and always after a rain. During the day the raucous-voiced parrots and parakeets have the air. The natives have conventionalizations of each bird's call which differ from ours and they laugh at ours and refuse to recognize them. The bush itself is a tangled mass of tall, very thin trees. One hardly ever sees a tree with a large trunk, but slender, four-inch-in-diameter trunks rise and rise towards the sky. The occasional flowers

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are high up, almost always solitaires and always unexpected. Our shoot-boy shot a *kapul* the other day, a little furry, red-brown marsupial with the most poignantly human hands. The feather duster, which Billy insists upon wielding, is made of cassowary feathers and we mix our photographic chemicals with a cassowary bone dagger.

Some government officer in a burst of agricultural enthusiasm went about distributing seeds here. Most natives would have refused to plant them or at least refused to eat the crops. But these people are epicureans and are delighted with every new taste. So they planted the string beans, the pumpkins, the maize, the cucumbers, the Chinese mustard lettuce, the tomatoes and the watermelons, and we almost always have fresh vegetables of some kind. And yet, who would expect to meet a stark naked *man-o-bush*, very dignified in his shell necklace, walking in one's door with a banana leaf full of tomatoes? Our shoot-boys keep us supplied with pigeons, so that we fare very well. It is easily the most pleasant place to work that I've struck. Cooler than Samoa. Cooler and nicer people than Manus and ditto for Omaha. Our lamps arrived with parts missing so we have only lanterns. But we breakfast at six and take no nap, so we are ready for bed by nine.

The people are very ethnologically unobtrusive. They like to have us here as a neighborhood store, as it were. It is convenient to be able to get salt and matches and knives and pipes and beads whenever they wish. They are quite willing to talk to us to keep us amused, as talk seems to be what we want. The children like to sit and play with my hair or stroke my hands or listen to the clink of the typewriter. They never go beyond sensation—the five senses, with sight and hearing only lightly exercised, and the brain never. Though they know that they think with the brain, with the cerebral hemispheres, in fact. But they forget with the heart, and it is the heart which goes away when people sleep and feeds on the red berries of a special tree, and so growth comes in the night. Sorcery is by getting hold of a bit of an enemy's body-leavings and passing it on into the *man-o-bush* country, where a sorcerer smokes it. If you know someone is trying to kill you, you spend your life taking a cathartic, the red sap of a tree which, when it is cut across, looks like a wounded piece of flesh, and so you wear yourself down to an appre-



Ilautoa, Kule and their daughter, Mausi, in the doorway of their house.

hensive shadow. The idea seems to be to cut your connections with your previous excreta as frequently as possible, so that the connection with the bit the sorcerer has will be severed.

The secret of the House Tambaran and the sacred flutes (who knows, the Catholic fathers ask, what the flutes really mean?) resolves itself into the way the men keep meat away from the women by saying that the monster eats it and then secretly consuming it themselves. The flutes the men blow to scare the women away while they hide the meat. So much for one of the great secrets of the New Guinea mainland.

They never tire of exclaiming how weak my hair is and how clean my hands. The very small children's response to a white skin was to ask

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if they might wash their hands clean. Although these are supposed to be primitive Papuans, they have a fair number of our institutions—the family, the brain, the kiss, the chain. Love to all.

From a letter to William Fielding Ogburn
Alitua
March 7, 1932

They are almost pure sensationalists, these natives. There is an enormous development of oral eroticism in children, due I believe to long suckling combined with a willingness to separate older suckling children from their mothers for a couple of days at a time. Food and women are the chief values in the culture—women as wives, not as liaisons or violent seizures, as in Dobu and Manus, respectively. Patriliney is put over very strongly and there are definite moves to separate mother and daughter. For example, weaning proceeds by the mother smearing her nipples with mud, which she tells the child is excrement. A mother cannot be present when her daughter bears a child or she, the mother, will go blind.

There is a strong father-daughter attachment which appears—I can of course only speak provisionally as yet—to be translated easily into a dependent wifely relationship, as wives are bought as small children and go to live with the husband's family—the husband is usually only a youth—and are fed and cherished by their future husbands and their fathers-in-law.

There is a great emphasis upon physical contact. Everyone is eternally hugging or patting everyone else, and if a human being is lacking, a dog or a pig will do. Pigs are so petted and cosseted that they assume all the characteristics of dogs—hang their heads under rebuke, snuggle up to regain favor, and so on. . . .

It is a remarkably coherent culture with simple metaphors and fairly obvious mechanisms. The language, on the other hand, is exceedingly complex and rich; learning to speak with over twenty third-person pronouns is also a little wearing, considering the simplicity of the results obtained, rather like opening a tin of cigarettes with a blow torch. There is a beach, mountain and plains variety of the one linguis-

tic group. At present we are in the mountains with four boys from the beach, and we shall presently proceed to the unlovely plains, which are filled with blowflies. . . .

Alitua
March 15, 1932

We have just been through the most ethnologically fruitful and generally wearing week we have had. Balidu, who is the "father of all," a tall, lean old man with a close and grasping nature, a broad and falsely amiable smile and the judicial manner of an important colonial governor, was giving a big feast to celebrate the earlier initiation of his son, Badui, a well-turned-out youth of about eighteen, who has two little wives of ten and twelve, respectively, and who, as the eldest son of Balidu, is already on his way to being an important person. As the big feast meant bringing the Tambaran into the House Tambaran and a huge gathering of people here, other people planned to transact their various small businesses, too. So there were also a series of smaller feasts, quarrels, recriminations, marriage payments, divinations and what not.

To appreciate what it means to have over 200 people gathered here, it is necessary to realize that the village is only a little over a chain (66 feet) wide and about a New York avenue block long. It is just a little level piece chipped off the top of a razor-back ridge with the clay worn hard by years of use. On each side the bush slopes steeply down several hundred feet. There are about 30 houses in the village, some of them only little boxes on stilts, 8 by 10 or 12 feet, others only rough shelters on the ground. As even the village site is not level but a series of little shelves and undulations, the place is flooded when it rains. Every bit of food, every stick of firewood, leaves for cooking and serving food, etc.—all have to be carried in a net suspended from the woman's forehead up the impossibly steep slippery paths.

So to entertain the expected crowd everyone had to work for several weeks beforehand bringing up supplies. They went away in small groups to work sago and came back from sleeping in the swamps with their eyes bleary and some pounds thinner. The yams are small this year

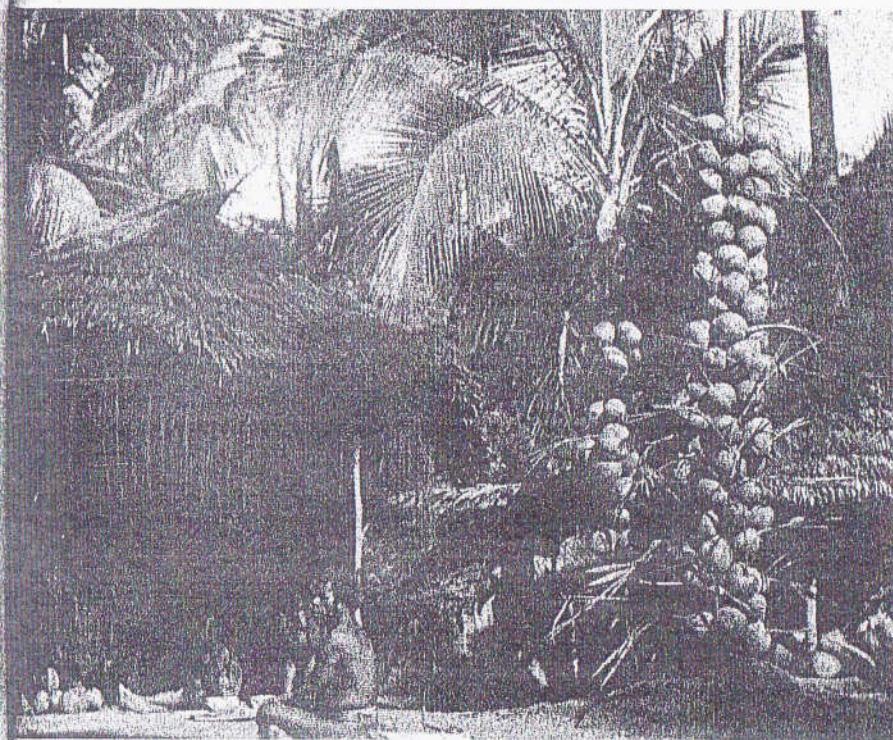
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Climbing the steep, slippery paths, a woman carries every kind of heavy load in the net suspended from her forehead.

because of an evangelistic cult, which promised that the white men would be driven out, a flood would wash the natives white in boiling water, their ancestors would return, and Burns Philp would continue to send them plenty of food, while the German priests would be returned to work as cook-boys and to fill up the shower baths which every native would have. So they built new houses and waited for the revealed time; meanwhile their yams sprouted and went bad. Everyone is a little sad over the harvest, but not very sad because no one here, except very small children, ever maintains a mood of any depth or duration. One party was out hunting for weeks, getting tree possums,

wallabies and tree-climbing kangaroos with ridiculous little hunting dogs that hardly look big enough to catch rats. This meat was then smoked in the bush and brought in all tied in a bundle decorated with pink and green streamers, very impressive and very high. Although the feast was a family matter, each man piled up his contribution in style and the rest of the family jogged around the pile in line, shouting, in acceptance of the contribution. Every time any member of the clan made his contribution, the family of Balidu, helped by the rest of the clan, cooked a feast of taro croquettes coated with grated coconut and gave it to him. Sometimes 25 men have been busy at once grating coconuts.



Coconuts saved for many months are displayed at a feast. A Plains sorcerer looks on.

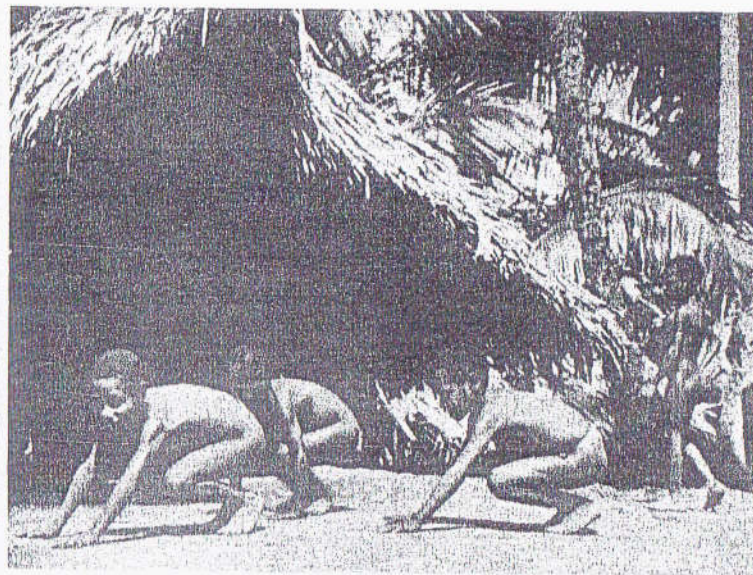
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Then they brought the Tambaran into the village and all of us mere females and children ran away to the end of the village and repeated solemnly: "If we see it we will die." Meanwhile Reo went about with the Tambaran, which is really two flutes—a mama and a papa who very obligingly beget children (the uninitiated are told) to sell to other villages, which lack flutes, for pigs. When the Tambaran was safely housed in the village all of us were allowed to come back again. But later in the evening the Tambaran lost his temper because, Balidu said, he had not had enough to eat that day. He started throwing sticks out of the house and we had to scuttle over the side of the hill and down the slope in the dark. Children got separated from their mothers and wailed bitterly, and one kindly little blusterer got up and started beating the outside of the House Tambaran for its treatment of the women. But everybody made such a fuss over this untraditional behavior that he got quite sulky and the next day had a fight with one of his wives to restore his masculine prestige.

I had to pause here while I went to investigate a child's cry, at present a subhead of scientific research. The children have a grand time having fits of hysterics in which they roll on the ground and bite the dust in a very literal fashion.

Once the old Tambaran is safely housed, all the young men in the village attend upon him, beating hand drums which have a deep, pleasant throbbing sound, like very soft drums, keeping the flutes wailing, a pleasant enough sound though quavery and unpatterned like an orchestra tuning its wind instruments, and pounding the big wooden drums which just make nasty noises. They also sing, at first sweetly but more and more raucously as the hours wear on and they become hoarser and hoarser.

After this has gone on for several days the continual noise, combined with children crying, people shouting, dogs barking and the general clatter and litter and confusion of a picnic ground, with people cooking and eating all over the place and a badly regulated orchestra in the background, is overwhelming. People are weary from overeating, if they are guests, and from under-eating, if they are hosts, weary from the discomforts of travel and too close quarters, from sleeping on the ground or pushed off into some house corner far from the fire, weary of



Children gathered for a feast play at imitating possums.

hearing accusations of sorcery. Everyone is cross and ready for quarrels. There was one set-to with clubs and staves and a spear or two which probably would have blown up into a nice little war if we hadn't been here.

Right after that was over, a party of six men wearing black paint on their foreheads and carrying green nettles, a sign that they had come to inquire about sorcery, stalked into the village. Then Gerud, our assistant cook-boy, was requisitioned to have a fit of possession and he dashed about digging in all the nearby mud and producing bits of rotting bamboo, which he alleged contained body-leavings of people from other places, and storing up a fine lot of trouble for everyone. One poor accused man turned up the next day to protest his innocence and finally burst into tears, whereat his accusers gave him some tobacco and that was over. Finally, the Tambaran was supposed to walk about and taboo all the coconut trees, and we all ran away. But unfortunately our shoot-boy caught a pig, which we distributed to our friends, and

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Arapesh men play the sacred flutes, and women and children must hide.

the Tambaran decided to stay and eat the pig, too, so it's still here, kept alive by the few men who remain in the place.

This great burst of activity came at just the right time, after I'd had time to work up a lot of preliminary detail and knew everyone, so I could make the best of it. But things happened so fast that I fairly raced from wedding presents to sorcery quarrels, scribbling as I went.

We've had a rather stormy month, altogether. Jack ran away because it was rumored he was trying to marry one of the already engaged girls. We had an anxious week before we got him back, for he was afraid of sorcery here, and we can't do without him; at least Reo's work on the language would suffer badly. Intelligence is such a rare quality here. Then Chinnery came up and spent three days with us talking over future places of work. That disorganized the boys somewhat, and then we ran out of sago to feed our boys here. In order to get

rice up here, two boys would have to be on the road all the time, as a two-man load only lasts five days. So we've had to think up endless stratagems to get sago, which the people loathe working.

Still, it's such a delightful climate that all these difficulties are compensated for by a temperature which has never touched 80° since we've been here. I'm in better health than I've been since before I went to Manus. In the long intervals of peace when there are only a few people in the village, we even have quiet days, ending up with a game of deck tennis before dinner. . . .

Alitoa

April 20, 1932

We still have not decided what to call this mountain people for they have no name for themselves, just friendly little nicknames or names for sections of a community, like *man-o-bush* or "poisonous snakes." The weather has continued glorious, although now that the northwest monsoon is dying there are bad storms which make the thatch stand up like fur on the back of an angry cat and knock down the more superannuated houses of the village.

All wind and rain come from supernatural creatures called *walin*, who inflict storms on the entire community whenever unwanted people of another clan invade their domain or when members of the proper clan come and do not speak politely, reminding them of the relationship. . . . These people have made the *man-o-bush* into the devil, the man who traffics in the temporary angers of his nice neighbors, the professional sorcerer. The ghosts they have localized under the care of the *walin* of each clan and you do not have to encounter them if you go hunting elsewhere and are careful where you get your firewood.

So in the village you are free to have a good time—to smoke and chew and yawn and hum little songs under your breath and repeat the name of the nicest baby over and over or sing the baby to sleep by reciting the names of your favorite pig—or if you haven't any baby, a puppy or better still a little pig will do. If you are feeling gay, you can put flowers in your hair and red and white paint on your face; or if you like, you can put the paint on the baby or the pig. If you are feeling cross, you

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put the black paint of war on the forehead of the ten-year-old. If you have a headache, you tie a piece of bark around your head and go and sit in the *place-lear* so that everyone will know how miserable you feel. If your mind runs on feasts, you can get out the hand drum and thump it happily all by yourself. If your pig dies, you can fasten a set of spears in a piece of bark and tie a yam to the bundle and set it in front of your wife's doorway, just to show her what you think of the way she looks after the pigs, and then *she* can take a long bright leaf and tie it into a knot and hang it over the door, just to say that she won't cook any more food for the people whose jealous talk made her pig die until they give her something nice for a present. If you have something important to say, you stalk through the village and everybody knows by your shoulders that something is up and trails along to see what it is.

For all that, life is complicated at times. It is dusk. We have not yet lighted our big lamp (which arrived two weeks ago) so dusk means the cessation of work on paper and we sit down for a breathing space before dinner. The village is dark, only an occasional flicker of fire shows through the eyelets in the bark walls of the houses. A tense nervous boy appears by the entry to the house-cook and stands there staring. We know that he has something important to say and wait. Is the sago bad, or has there been a fight, or has someone run away? He explains: "Gerud would like to work tonight after dinner. Myelahai has lost a big knife and he wants Gerud to tell him where it is." Gerud is assistant cook-boy and the only diviner in the village. We assent. Gerud's divining always brings us a fine lot of ethnological detail.

He eats a little bone-scraping from the skull of an ancestor mixed with a little ginger. Then he dashes madly about in the dark, plunging up and down the steep slopes at either end of the village until he unearths a bit of bamboo filled with rubbish, which he can allege is a bit of the physical essence of someone which has been placed in a wild taro root to cause a sore. Then he falls flat on the ground, arms outflung in a crucified position, and answers questions and also makes startling remarks about usually unmentionable things and throws in a few dark hints about future disasters.

Yes, we welcomed Gerud's divining. We comment on that fact and another face looms up in the half-lit doorway. Tommy. Tommy is wor-

ried and slightly truculent. He has come to say that he means to ask Gerud whether the brother of Yabinigi, our shoot-boy, hid that piece of possum bone which everyone saw him slip into his basket or whether he threw it away. Now we do *not* welcome Gerud's divining, for Yabinigi is a dead shot and the support of the household for meat. If his brother, who is an aged and faded moron, did hide that piece of possum bone, he means to damage one of our boys. This would mean a feud and the departure of Yabinigi, and with him all prospect of fresh meat. There remains the dinner hour.

Gerud is in the house-cook, just one thin wall and half a dozen feet away. We know from experience that his madness permits him the use of his five senses, tuned more acutely than ever. So during dinner we chatter to the table-boy (in Pidgin, not English) to explain that of course Yabinigi's brother did not want to sorcerize the boys. "How could he? He has no rings to pay the *man-o-bush*, a fine figure of a sorcerer he is!" And furthermore, of course, if it is true, Yabinigi will have to leave as he could not stay where his brother is accused and there is no one to take his place, so, of course, there will be no more wild pigs, no more possums, no more birds whose feathers make such wonderful headdresses. Then, too, we wonder whether it really is worthwhile giving Gerud permission to divine if it is likely to produce trouble.

Dinner is over. Gerud dashes about and falls flat in his trance. Tommy, kneeling and anxious, asks: "What did Yabinigi's brother do with that bone?" Gerud answers: "He threw it away down below because possums are his taboo, so he hid it first to save the boys' feelings." We sigh. The meat supply is safe for the next week, but only for the next week.

Then Reo goes into the interior and in one village Yabinigi shoots two pigeons and Reo keeps them for his carriers and boys. Later Yabinigi shoots a pig and an old man who was angry about the pigeons takes a bit of bone of the pig and fastens it up. Gerud reports this in a trance, which we anticipated, and Yabinigi, who is very temperamental, shoots nothing for a week. Thereupon we give out tripe instead of regular boys' meat and gradually Yabinigi's skill returns. You can never quite tell about Yabinigi. He used to run amuck quite frequently, but people got tired of it and fed him soup made of dog's dung. Afterwards

they told him what the soup contained and that he would be fed it again unbeknownst to him unless his mad fits were cured. That was a year ago and he has not run amuck since. Still, we do not let him have a gun at night except when he borrows it to take to some relative who has been annoyed over not receiving some part of the kill, to get him to take away the angry talk which he made about future hunting.

Collecting, too, has its difficulties. In the House Tambaran—the sacred men's house—are carved figures which are named and charmed into a high state of dangerousness. When Reo went into the interior he marked some for purchase. Their owners carried them here, done up like little pigs in pieces of stiff bark. They came by the little side roads which are taken by women who are taboo, by hunters who wish to get home secretly with their kill and by people who want to buy pigs and who fear if others see them go they may say: "I hope he doesn't find a pig to buy." They arrived in the village. Reo put them in the storeroom. Immediately came a storm of protest from our boys. If they ate any food from that room, they would waste away and die. The place where our house stood was hot enough because a big House Tambaran had stood there, and these carvings were awfully hot and everyone would be ill. Then came a delegation from the village saying it was not safe to keep those carvings in a house where there were women and children, they must be placed in the village House Tambaran. Very well, we were only too willing, for I had been forbidden to go into the storeroom lest I see these mysterious images. But who was to carry them? The *man-o-bush* were still here, but they were tired and sulky because they had been paid only twice what they had been promised. No one in the place would touch the dangerous things, so Reo had to carry them himself up and down the village from which the women had all been barred within their houses. Then the secret of the exorcising leaf was bought dearly from the *man-o-bush*, and the store and house were carefully broomed. The worst is yet to come, for we have no idea how we are going to get the incubuses to the coast or whether all the Cobb boys will run away if they are brought to the plantation. While they were being carried, I hid in a native house with a woman who spent her time showing me an abortive drug and commenting sharply that men could not see the

drug, that they could not even hear the name of it. Thus feminine self-esteem was avenged.

And so it goes. A mad world where little bits of taro and little bits of yam are each bought separately for a separately served spoonful of beads or matches, where every misfortune is magically determined and where one sits ready to pounce on the significance of a plate of croquettes being carried by the door. It is grand to have the lamp working; flickering, smoking lanterns have been a trial. While Reo was away something went wrong with the lamp and I could not light it, due of course to a party of *man-o-bush* who came to sell tobacco, which I refused, and gave them matches for vocabulary instead. When they met Reo in the bush they told him I had crossed them and so they had sold me nothing; this was tactful, for they thought Reo would be angry if he knew I had given them matches for nothing but a little *talk-talk*.

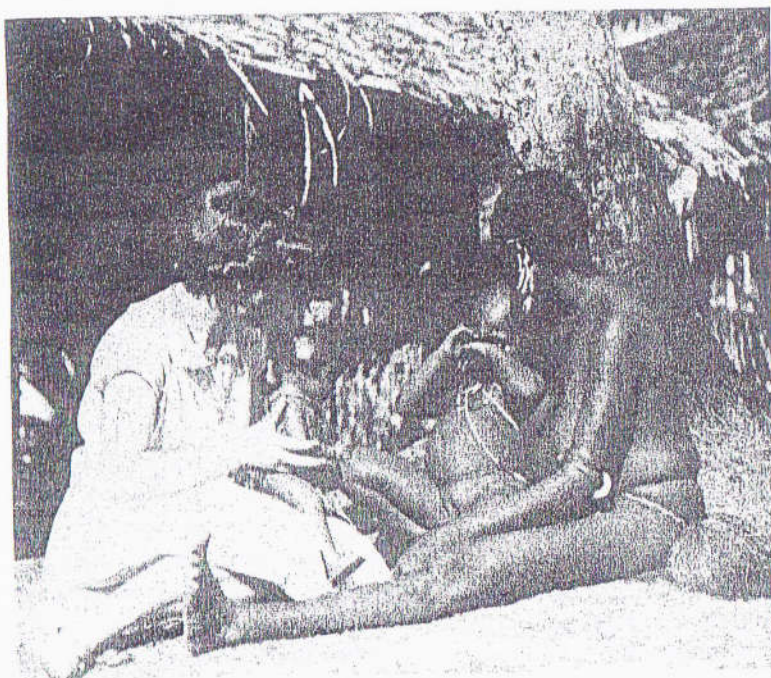
Then there was the night last week when Amito'a and I dyed skirts. This is one of the occasions when the women get back at the men. No men or children can come near, no smell of meat cooking, no knife which has ever touched meat, no feather headdresses can come near. The very sound of men's voices will spoil the dye, just as the sound of women's voices will anger the Tambaran and as the touch of a woman's hand may spoil hunting gear. We squatted in a windswept little leaf shelter and watched the great pot, its top covered with pads of big green leaves, boil over with a bubbling fluid which gradually turned blood red. And once some boys talked, and the skein of sago threads which was being put into the pot caught fire. And Amito'a's husband stayed with Reo until midnight and just to reassert his masculine superiority told Reo all about the nice brain soup which the warriors used to drink, brewed from the scooped-out brains of the enemy, although up to now they had been denying any touch of cannibalism. So Baimal danced about the room, illustrating the savage delight of war, for Baimal is always light and airy even when his talk is of death. And Amito'a and her sister-in-law, Ilautoa, squatted by the watched pot and said: "We feed pigs, we make grass skirts, we dance, two by two we go for firewood, two by two we bring up water, two by two we dye our grass

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skirts." The wind howled and ruffled the thatch, and I enjoyed it in spite of the smoke in my eyes.

Sorcery delegations, looking for the bits of the physical nature of their relatives, come into the village and talk menacingly to one another of what they will do to other people (not present), people who, when they do find them, they will pat. Then someone asks me to bring out the doll, the snake or the little toy dog. The dour atmosphere vanishes before enthusiastic old men who dance about with the doll, shouting: "Granddaughter! Granddaughter!" and little boys who hold the doll reverently and whisper: "Grandmother." The newcomers, who have not seen the snake before, scuttle up the house ladders.

When they first saw the doll, they thought it was a dead child and were horrified by it. It took them a long time to get over their horror.



I show the doll to Nemausi, about 3 years old, and her mother, Whasimai.

Then they asked: "Will it grow?" and "Does it drink milk?" and "Why doesn't it cry?" And even though they have been told over and over again that it is an image, an *aboril*, the women still shout with disapproval if I lay it down with its head lower than its heels. And the bright little boys ask: "Why haven't you a pig, too?" And Reo scolds because of all the confusion which is created by the snake, the doll, the rat and the dog when he wants to get off quietly in a corner with an informant and find out whether a word has a whispered terminal /h/ or not and learn charms which will later make us all sick.

Our knowledge of the outside world is fragmentary. We know that America has done something which is like going off the gold standard only not exactly that. We know that Lindbergh's baby was kidnapped, but not whether it was found. We know that Edgar Wallace and Edison are dead, and that probably Japan is fighting China. Ruth sent some *New Yorkers* and *Times* and they were manna in the wilderness. . . .

On the veranda Reo is doing legend texts and the old men passing by ask: "What are you doing?" "Legends." "Child's play," they snort and pass by. Legends are only for children, you tell them to your children and then heave a sigh of relief and forget the nonsense so that you are free to concentrate on important things like charms, which are just (as it were) "Tweedledum and Tweedledee, Rumpty-dum and Rumpty-dee," male and female. Of one thing these people are very sure and that is "Male and female created he them." But at that, even those who are sophisticated about white people sometimes slip up in talking to me.

Alitoa

July 12, 1932

When I last wrote, I expected that we would be leaving on the June *Mirani*. The possibilities of this neighborhood seemed about exhausted. The next tribe on one side is badly missionized; on the other, an oil company is roving about with 100 boys. Beyond that the area is declared not under control because of a fight with a patrol, and then comes Aitape with a mountain wall behind it that has to be scaled

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with ropes. On the east is the Sepik River, but no way of getting there. There is said to be one pinnacle in 300 miles here and its owner and his wife (departed for Hongkong), leaving a newly come and very green young cousin of Bernard Shaw in charge, with the munificent sum of two shillings . . . and no idea when the owners would be back. So there seemed no way of getting anywhere and we planned to go to Rabaul and leave from there for an island.

Then at the end of May Reo went down to Karawop and found that the government pinnacle was going up the Sepik empty to pick up a party which was going to make a patrol overland from Aitape, and he arranged for us to go up in that about mid-August. So we sat down and quickly ordered six months' supplies. The order reads very oddly: item, 1,200 lbs. of rice; item, 1 packet of needles; item, 1 mosquito room; item, 1 tea kettle; item, 24 dozen tins of meat, and so on.

After that was sent off, the news came through that there is a dysentery epidemic in Aitape and a quarantine which may last for months and spoil the trip. But with unexpected good luck for this country, the owner of the pinnacle returned from Hongkong with two suitcases, one case of whiskey and one of gin, so we will be able to get up the Sepik next month. We'll stay up there six months or perhaps more. The blessed thing about it is that we can go straight there without an interval of putting on white clothes and talking politely to all the other people who feel that the natives should be reserved for their special varieties of exploitation.

Reo has been away a good deal of the time these last two months and most of the local population have been walking about the country "finding rings," i.e., trading tobacco and feathers for baskets and rings. Most of the time the village has been quite empty, just a deserted, swept space filled with closed houses set on top of the mountain where I lived and typed back notes or painted copies of bark paintings which were too damaged to take home or explored the psychology of stray children. Sometimes a rumor would come through that the government was coming and *garamuts*—slit gongs—would be beaten and people would rush into the village to sit about without occupation and often without food for a couple of days until the rumor proved to be, like most news here, the work of someone's imagination. News here is

shouted from mountain top to mountain top in a long-drawn howl which resembles dogs baying at the moon. The high mountains take the sounds and toss them back and forth until they become almost unintelligible. Then one hears people saying: "Oh, the *Kiap* [the government officer] is coming," and "A police-boy has come to Liwo," and "All the men of Liwo have gone to war," and "I think a man in Liwo has killed a pig," and "Now do you suppose the wife of that old man in Liwo has run away?" Any one of these speculations may crystallize into a statement of absolute fact at any moment.

The first time Reo went into the interior they shouted from the next mountain that he had been attacked and wounded and that a runner was coming through with a note. I sent a boy flying to meet the runner, and the two came up fifteen minutes later—while the local population stood about bewailing Reo as they do the dead—saying that he had been attacked with a tomahawk in the shoulder and arm. Then I opened the note and it said: "Please send more tea to keep the exposed negatives in, there isn't enough."

Someone had seen the note passing from village to village. And there had been a murder of a native the day before. The people further down below had lured him out hunting and had killed him and cut his body into bits and buried them in a mud hen's nest. The two bits of news—that Reo had gone into the *next talk down below more* and that a native had been murdered there—just got glued together.

It's curious, these people are not liars in the ordinary sense of the word. We've had one theft and that just a box of matches by an ex-work-boy from another place. But I discovered it and marched up to the end of the village and demanded from a seated group: "Who has those matches?" They are trade matches and we use them as currency, so there are literally hundreds of boxes about. I couldn't possibly have proved a thing. But the silly boy immediately took them out of his ditty bag, looking sheepish, and said feebly that he hadn't stolen them, he had just put them into his bag.

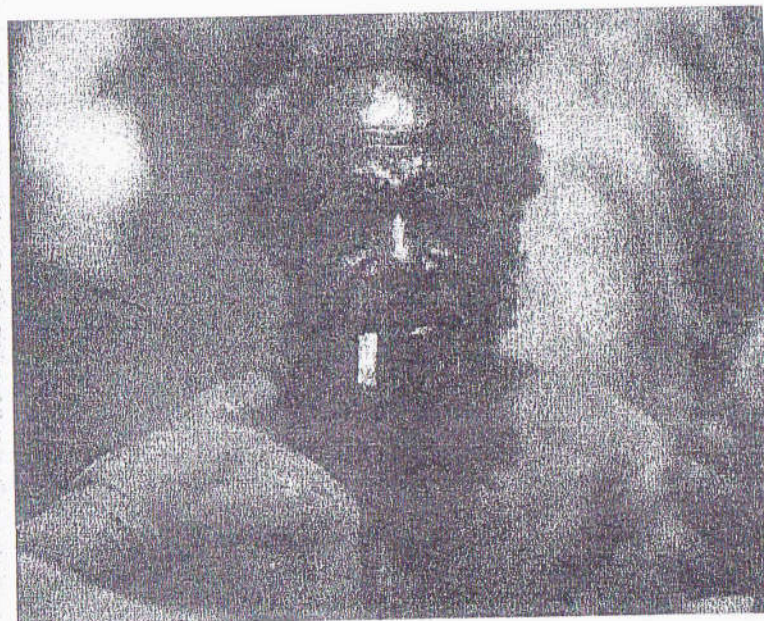
But what they don't do in intentional lying, they make up for unintentionally. The other day I heard a great lot of talk at the other end of the village and turning to a native nearby I said: "What's that row about?" "Oh," said he, "that's Whoiban. He has come over to see

Balidu and he's telling him that if he, Balidu, doesn't stop sorcerizing Aden, he, Whoiban, won't help Balidu take pigs to the Kobelin feast." I then walked up to the other end of the village. Balidu was sitting down peacefully under his house. "Where is Whoiban?" "Whoiban isn't here. He's in Liwo." "Was he here?" "No." I returned to Wabe and confronted him with the fact. He shrugged his shoulders. Someone had said that Whoiban was coming today, and if he had come that is what he would have said.

Sometimes parties of *man-o-bush*, naked except for necklaces and bones through their noses, pass through. They march into the village as bold as brass, demanding food from the few women who are here. If they don't get it, later someone will die, they hint delicately. There was one *man-o-bush* who walked up and down in the middle of a feasting crowd at Kobelin, and remarked loudly: "I am tired of being a sorcerer. I am sick of it. Continually people ask me to kill people. I am weary. Of course, when a man in Dakua died, I revenged his death. Still, I am tired of sorcery. Of course, this is my road. I always go this way to the beach. I never go down the dugong road, only on the road of the death adder. I would have liked the head of a pig. You haven't given me the head of a pig. You have eaten all your pigs. Well, some sago will do."

And no one of the fifty men who listened answered a word, but quickly some went and got him some sago. For in his house and in the houses of his friends, tied up in small pieces of leaf, is the *dirt* of the men of the beach and the men of the mountains—a piece of headband, a bit of old bark cloth, a handful of grass skirt on which the personality of the wearer still rests. When the *man-o-bush* cooks this *dirt*, the spirit of the victim leaves the body and crawls towards the interior in the guise of an insect or a snake, until finally the *man-o-bush* traps it in a bamboo and chokes it to death.

Nearly every grown man this side of the grass plains has *dirt* outstanding in the plains villages. The anger of the neighbor who stole it and sent it off to an inland sorcerer has long since evaporated. The quarrel because of which it was stolen is almost forgotten, but the *dirt* remains and the unhappy victim is subjected to systematic blackmail by the sorcerer. Knives, rings, tomahawks pass in an endless stream into the plains where ugly old men, covered with ringworm and



A Plains sorcerer.

unwashed—for a sorcerer may not wash while he works—sit and cook the *dirt* and take it off the fire again when the pay is enough. And small parties of two or three *man-o-bush* walk safely through a population of many hundreds, for the means to avenge their death is safe in the interior.

Meanwhile the beach villages exercise another sort of blackmail on the unfortunate men of the mountains. For from the beach come all the new fashions—armbands and headbands, the newest way of fastening possum fur on the end of a basketry headband instead of around it, an armlet with a pendant of shells, new-style earrings made of grass tassels—trifles and trash, mostly, but immensely valued. All these vanities come from Murik Village, near the mouth of the Sepik. Murik is the Paris of the coast and the Murik people sell their styles dearly, for many pigs, rings or perhaps the prostitution of the buyers' women. One vil-

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lage pays for each new set of vanities and each is a job lot which may include big masks, death-dealing charms, dance steps, sets of ordinary ornaments and a new style of dress. To get the package, each village up the mountain road must pay pigs and rings. Thus the custom of wearing a G-string has gradually penetrated the interior as each village has paid for the right.

So these poor people live between two drains. For all that they enjoy in life—feathers and finery, dances and new songs—they must pay pigs and rings to the beach; and for the preservation of their health and their very lives, which the jealousy, malice and outrage of their neighbors have placed in jeopardy, they must pay and pay to the hated *man-o-bush*.

And even we, although we buy their food and their services, must go into the interior to collect the really good things, as La'abe remarked after he had carried a package of £40 in shillings from Karawop and nearly drowned in the rivers along the coast: "It was hard work for me to bring this money just for the *man-o-bush*!" And now Reo has gone away again into the interior, carrying tomahawks and long knives—for which these people have nothing to exchange—to purchase carvings and paintings from the *man-o-bush*.

We are becoming steadily more disassociated from the outside world. We had stopped Rabaul's forwarding our mail because we thought we were leaving, so we have had no mail for two months nor will we get any for another month. The mainspring of my watch is broken. The only radio news we have seen refers to events which we don't understand for the most part. It is like being on board a ship, condemned to a few hundred feet of moving about and knowing that practically nothing can possibly happen. Recently the District Officer and the Medical Assistant passed through and were hung up here for two days. After they left we were both ill; the impact of white people, sitting about, more food than we usually eat and possibly onions, which we hadn't tasted for six months, was too much for us. I am more convinced than ever that the way to do field work is never to come up for air until it is all over, but of course it is luck to have a spot healthful enough to make it possible.

I repeat my cry for reading matter, old magazines preferably. Nov-

els aren't good, for one is tempted to finish them, which is bad. With a magazine one can ration oneself to one article or story a day.

I even begin to wonder what the date is. These people have names for moons, like "the moon when we get bananas from a deserted yam garden," but as everybody plants at a different time, no two families' moons are alike. As they say: "You count the moons but we just know their names," and all they really know are names which can be applied when appropriate to the moon which is up at present, and no two families have the same calendar. They think it's very odd that we think a moon would have only one fixed name.

The three boys left behind by Reo—who, together with three children, make up the population of the village—are all painting themselves and giving a concert in the hope that I will buy a new flute one of them has made, for the whole sum of a razor blade. Which I have said I would.

From a letter to William Fielding Ogburn

Alitua

August 10, 1932

We are hoping to wind up our eight months in this culture within a few weeks and go up the Sepik and attack the contiguous inland culture from the river, instead of going three days further over mountains. But there is a dysentery epidemic creeping along the coast which may shut us in—make it impossible to take native carriers through or have them bring us up any further supplies. In that case, we'll probably have to take what supplies we have and lots of ammunition and go further inland and trust to living on the country. It's very poor game country, quickly played out. After the Sepik we shall probably do an Australian tribe if our funds hold out. We are spreading them as thin as possible.

We have been able to get excellent material on cultural change here. This is a flexible, receptive culture, continually importing new ideas, a process which has been considerably accelerated by the opening up of the King's Highway, so that "walking about to find things," once a very circumscribed vested interest, is now open to all. It is also a culture with very transparent social processes. The theory of incest which

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Reo put into his *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* article is here demonstrated most explicitly. There is the tendency for the small group to try to keep its daughters at home or to intermarry continually with one other small group, which soon comes to the same thing—and the counter-tendency to form alliances for cooperative work with other groups. People who refuse to marry their daughters off are regarded as socially criminal and other groups come and abduct them. The only sanction against incest is “if you marry your sister, what will you do for brothers-in-law? Who will help you to find meat and sago? Who will fasten pigs?” Keeping your women to yourself is strictly parallel to keeping your surplus yams to yourself or your pigs.

The saying goes: “Other women, other pigs, other yams you can eat. [This is literal.] Your own sister, your own mother, your own pigs, your own yams which you have piled up [indicating a surplus], these you cannot eat.” Seen in this light, incest prohibitions can be understood not as some obscure psychological process in the mind of the individual, but as necessary to social cooperation in societies which operate at the kinship level of integration.

Kenakatem, Yuat River
September 1932

In the mind of the most suburban Rabaulite and in the mind of the wildest bush native, the Sepik stands for mosquitoes, crocodiles, cannibals and floating corpses—and I can assure you we have seen them all. We are not on the Sepik itself—that is Bateson's stamping ground—but on a tributary eighty-seven miles from the mouth of the Sepik which runs east into the Madang area. This river is called the Yuat. It is parallel to the Keram River, where Thurnwald worked, and about a day further up.

The mosquitoes have not been exaggerated; they are the most amazing, determined, starving crew imaginable. The natives can tell at a glance whether they have had a full meal and are likely to make a nasty bloodstain on one's clothes—but most of them never have had a full meal and are fighting for just one before they die. It took us about

a week to study out the various ramifications of the mosquito problem: it has a clothing, an architecture, a closet economy all its own. For instance, you can't keep anything in suitcases, for the mosquitoes get in the cracks and when you go to find something attack by the thousand. Air-proof boxes, if you swish the air all about while opening them, will do. But the best plan is to spread one's possessions thin over endless shelves, so that everything can be found and grabbed before more than a hundred wounds are sustained. Bathing except at midday has to be done with a whisk in one hand. Reo has of course discarded shorts, and I have evolved a costume which looks like a beach parade but serves very well, an ordinary dress and pajama legs—fortunately Reo had a lot of old ones in pastel shades, so I can even evolve color schemes. This with a large straw hat—for short strolls a helmet isn't necessary—makes me feel slightly ridiculous but protected. The too-long pajamas bell over one's shoe tops.

Then one can't sleep in a room, for all the mosquitoes will go and hide in the corners during the day, having been disappointed of the feast which they glimpsed through the net. Even two boxes placed near each other give them somewhere to hide. So we have a huge veranda, with the mosquito room standing in the middle of it, and our bed at one side. Away at the back is a dressing room; one side is a store, but most of it is just great open spaces, for air and safety. The mosquito room is a box, nine by ten by ten feet, made of copper wire and uprights which bolt together. The door closes with a pulley made of a box of cartridges. There is a box with two drop-hinged ends, thrust through the wire, and one boy cautiously inserts a dish and drops his trap door, then the inside boy opens his side and whisks out the dish. The floor is made of a ground sheet, and one has to use ash trays inside and not pour the tea grounds through the floor, which seems ridiculous faddishness in New Guinea. Inside there is just room for a table, two straight chairs, and two easy—our old ones—chairs, a box for papers, a tiny bookcase for glasses, my workbasket, etc., and at all four corners hang native net bags containing our slender supply of reading matter, mending, etc. For once you go in, you don't want to open the door if you can possibly help it. It means living in horribly small quarters and

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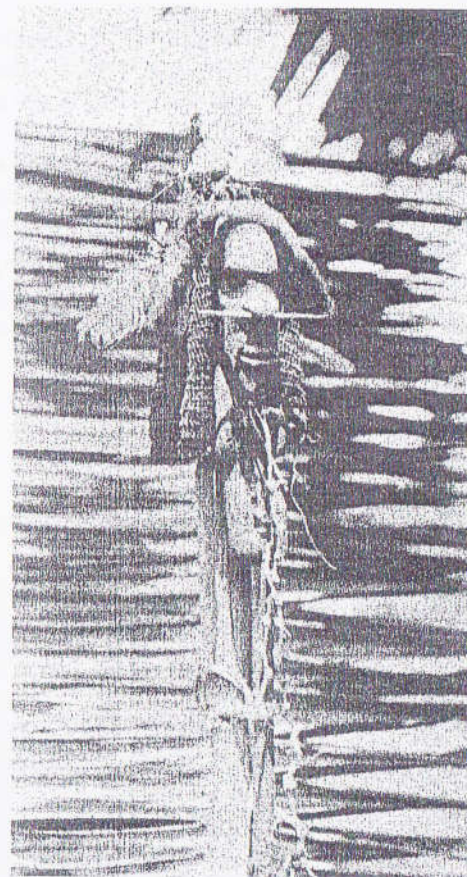
climbing over each other all the time, and clearing away work so that the table can be laid, but it represents heaven none the less.

We have another room for working in, as the mosquito room would not be safe with swarming crowds about. The other house has nothing in it and there are usually plenty of onlookers to discourage the mosquitoes.

So the mosquitoes deserve their reputation; as for the rest, the crocodiles do eat people quite often, they make drawing water from the river at night a dangerous matter, they provide the art motif and a great model crocodile actually swallows the initiates, and most important of all, one can cook with the whites of crocodile eggs. "Making corn fritters with crocodile eggs among the cannibals." They were all cannibals until about four years ago; boys of twelve have eaten human flesh and they show merely a mischievous and merry glee in describing their previous diet, but the idea of eating rats fills them with shuddering nausea. And we've had one corpse float by, a newborn infant; they are always throwing away infants here, as the fathers object to observing the taboos associated with their survival.

It's a pretty enough place, a swift-flowing river about two blocks wide with high, grassy banks and a few palms. It looks like a river flowing through any flat country anywhere. In this it differs from the "Big Sepik," which does have a stronger resemblance to the "great grey-green, greasy Limpopo River, all set about with fevertrees" and is full of floating islands and things "too horrible to describe"—according to the narrators.

We got here in a tiny pinnace which had to make two trips to get our stores up. There is no anchorage between a point near Boram (Wewak) and the mouth of the Sepik fifty miles away, and the so-disant nephew of George Bernard Shaw, who is the engineer (Harris says Shaw has no brothers), was scared stiff, so we made a couple of false starts before setting out and in the end he and Reo had a rather anxious night of it. It has to be done at night because one has to get into the mouth of the Sepik at dawn. Boram has an ice machine with 72 chambers and kills a bullock a day, so we fared royally there. We had a day in Marienberg, too, with an anxious young patrol officer who



In Kenakatem, effigy of a man erected for a death ceremony.

began talking about how expensive visitors were and how he preferred tins to money, as soon as we arrived, and concealed his relief when we only stayed overnight and provided half the food. A glance at maps, etc., decided us on the Mundugumor people up this river, as the nearest large group off the Sepik and out of the mission's clutches. And here we have been for three weeks. It was much easier settling in with all our

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equipment available and then there were two partly completed houses which we simply altered.

The natives are superficially agreeable, but . . . they go in for cannibalism, headhunting, infanticide, incest, avoidance and joking relationships, and biting lice in half with their teeth. Also their language is simply ridiculously easy—has hardly any grammar at all. I've hardly had to learn it, it's so simple. But the women's grass skirts are quite gorgeous, and at dusk and dawn when there are deep shadows on the water and everyone comes out for a stroll, I like them very much. The village extends along the edge of the river and is under water in the wet season. At one end of the village is the chief man with ten wives, while his rival at the other end has nine. These harems are not primarily designed to minister to a Turklike lust, but rather are up-and-coming tobacco-growing concerns, work all done by the women. None of the women has ever seen a white woman before and I am sure I shall start a suffrage movement among the more distant villages who find me *talking place*—speaking the native language—an accomplishment of which the first white man certainly did not boast.

We brought our two best boys with us—Jack, who is now radiant, obstreperous, swift and forgetful, as cook, and Billy, who is growing more important and bossy every day but is still a jewel. We are also saddled with a child whom Jack calls "grandfather" and who is no use at all, but was brought along as a companion to Billy and was finally the cause of Jack's coming, because he was *sorry long two-fela monkey*—worried about the two little boys—he said. They simply can't believe that these friendly people who give them so much betel nut were really cannibals and they come and ask me every other day if it is true.

The longer one stays in New Guinea the more amenities accumulate; at present we have glass glasses, an oven for baking bread and a grater made out of a butter tin. Also our stores allow us two tins of asparagus a month, two tins of cauliflower and two tins of crackers. . . . A local fact which is not a compensation is that, being a river and easy to get about on, there are far too many white people about and the *kiap* has been here once and calaboosed half the male population over a stick fight, and a pinnacle passing today reports that he will be up again next week—to get the other half, I suppose. Where one can afford to trans-



Dancers wear cassowary feather headdresses; one carries a hand drum.

port even two tins of asparagus, the *kiap* is bound to be interfering around.

Kenakatem
December 2, 1932

It has been a long, grimy day. I am so sticky I loathe myself, but there is no bathing for another hour or it will all have to be done over again. I have worked on fishing, sago working and hunting methods, which mean diagrams galore, and Reo has been working on various odd kinds of tambarans, which has meant crowds of natives trooping into the inner room to open little baskets and display various esoteric bits of wood.

These people have been charming in many ways; they are even postponing their quarrels until we leave, a point which we—scientifically, of course—do not appreciate. It takes adepts in hypocrisy to be

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Kwenda and her son, about 6 years old, lead a dancing party.

sufficiently self-conscious to think of what a front they present to a white man. The Samoans would do it, but not the Manus, who are too sincere, or the Arapesh, who were too simple-minded, or the Dobuans, who could have thought of it but were too nasty.

Haven't we a fine lot of different peoples to ring the changes on? And in two weeks we will leave these and find some others. It is really much more startling than knowing personalities to know a lot of different cultures. The impact is so much more definite and compelling.

From these people we have wanted very little in the way of food and service and it has been very pleasant. Also, Reo has had a marvelous informant, a man with so good an analytical mind that one feels it is a tragedy that he should have been born in a primitive society where

all his powers of detachment, logical reasoning and attention are wasted. . . .

December 3, 1932

I shall be 31 next week. I am not dispirited by the fact as I have gotten in quite a lot so far and I do not seem to be looking any older, although this climate is hard on the skin. I am a little thinner and I play quite a decent game of deck tennis. Think of my playing any kind of athletic thing fairly well!

Tchambuli
February 1, 1933

We are now embarked on our third New Guinea culture, although all actual activity is at present suspended in the interests of getting a house built. We finished up Mundugumor quite happily and left them with gayer words and friendlier adieus than we have ever had from any primitive people. We had troubled them so little and they had all behaved so well—even to making us a special sacred flute with a heavily ornamented carving on top, which was named Kenakatem (our village) and presented to us with enormous style. The sacred flute is a baby crocodile, its mother is a water drum, and they took the water drum down to the water where it bore the sacred flute, which cried at first with a weak little newborn voice and then more full-throatedly as it emerged, was carried up the river bank and finally was lodged in state in our house, where someone came to feed it every day. Our boys ate its sacred food and were very happy. And the river obligingly rose just before we left so that there was no labor carrying our boxes down the river bank and they all smiled at us sweetly out of their so well-behaved presences. They had even solemnly decided to have no quarrels while we were there. . . .

All our possessions, still very numerous because we started out with between six and eight months' supplies, were stowed away on a slow and lumbering pinnace and we waited at Yuaramo, the village at the

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Initiation ceremony at the "birth" of a flute.

juncture of the Yuat and the Sepik, for the government pinnace. We spent a day in Yuaramo, sitting on the edges of our windblown mosquito net, and then the *Osprey*, with the young, very earnest and incredibly and awfully loquacious patrol officer, named Thomas, came along. Fortunately he likes bridge and we played three-handed bridge with a grim-death determination not to change the subject all that day. It is confined and wearing, this pinnace traveling in the full tropic heat, shut up inescapably in a three-by-four-foot cabin.

That night we slept in a middle Sepik village—the part of the Sepik which is by common agreement called Big Sepik by all the surrounding peoples. It was like stepping into a new native world to see the great well-built houses with their enormous house posts, the imposing horned roofs of the men's houses with giant gaping faces worked in rattan at each gable and the ceremonial roads threading their way



The flute named Kenakatem.

between huge artificial mounds. But Mr. Thomas had brought two kittens with him and one of them got shut up in the House Tambaran and one got lost in the grass and they mewed at each other all night except in the intervals when squads of angry police-boys were sent searching for them in the rain. He was very gay about it and kept suggesting captions like "Cat Catching in the Cannibal Camp," but it was a rather trivially sleepless night.

At dawn we caught the cat and rubbing our eyes and attended by clouds of mosquitoes climbed onto the pinnace and made a duck-

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shooting detour to see the spot Mr. Thomas dreams of making into a personally conducted tourist resort. And because of it we forgave him the cats and the compulsory bridge and also his having put half the big men of Mundugumor in calaboose right after we got there. For he took us to our first "black water," which is the loveliest thing the Sepik has to offer. The Sepik itself is a wide, monotonous and rather dirty yellow river, remarkable only for its varying load of drifting islands which have detached themselves from the half-submerged fen lands and have drifted out through some waterway and finally will float out to sea. But into these fens lead what the natives call *barets*—and you must all learn this word because I know of no English one to describe them. They are like canals. Often the natives either have cut them entirely or widened or changed them. They flow from inland lakes into the Sepik, when the Sepik is low, and sometimes when the Sepik is in flood from its mountain sources hundreds of miles higher up, the *barets* flow backward into the inland lakes. The water in them, unless too much of the Sepik has gotten in, is black, coal black and shining with a dull lustre, and tasting like lily stems and sun-heated oil. And the lake to which we came, through a *baret*, was all black, polished like a mirror, with faraway mountains ringing it all about and on its shining surface floated pink and white lotuses, lying in patches of thousands, their pads still and fixed on the black water, while among them stood, as if posed for a portrait, white ospreys and blue herons. It is all as ordered, as simple in its few contrasting themes, as a Japanese print, and the lack of miscellaneous, only half-congruent notes makes it seem unreal. It was before sunrise when we slid into the center of the lake and the black irregular arms of water stretched away among further and further patches of lotuses, seeming almost to meet the mountains, and there was no human thing there except ourselves. It is the best this country has to offer and very, very good.

But the *baret* which should have taken us out to the Sepik again was choked by an island which had started towards the sea and had gotten no farther than the *baret's* mouth, so we retraced our path across the lake, out again to the Sepik, and after another boiling day we picked Gregory Bateson up in the afternoon and slept that night in his village. Or rather, I slept and he and Reo talked, after I had finally coz-

ened Mr. Thomas away from them. Gregory was at Cambridge with Reo and has been working in the middle Sepik for almost a year this trip and he was here before. Afterwards the battle raged in the pinnace cabin as to whether we three were to talk anthropology or whether Mr. Thomas, fortified with a year of Radcliffe-Brown's lectures as a cadet, was to talk it. Reo and Gregory took to the baking roof in despair, while I listened sympathetically to Mr. Thomas and steadily made vows about teaching anthropology to otherwise reasonably harmless people.

At Ambunti we stayed with the wholly adorable District Officer, Robbie, who is loved by and loves everyone. He had as a guest, chance-sent on a recruiter's pinnace, a most ambiguous female with a rattrap mouth, mascara eyes and a wholly suspicious and deadly restraint of manner, who was, I think, pretending to pretend that she wasn't a reporter or a spy from the League of Nations. Sometimes she added to the comedy of life, but not thoroughly enough. I only properly enjoyed her the day we drank champagne before breakfast, certainly the only alcoholic drink in the world which can be appreciated at dawn. The fact that it wasn't our champagne, but belonged to some prospectors who were 300 miles further up the Sepik and counted on having it when they emerged with their pockets full of nuggets, didn't spoil its charm.

Then there were recruiters and pinnace owners and a ship's captain who could talk our Arapesh language, having blown up all the drums in one of their villages years ago as a government officer. There was a mad, proud recruiter and a slightly truculent little one and government officers—some good boy scouts and some not. Altogether it made quite an odd party. We played bridge, Reo and Gregory played chess, in between we discussed the functional method in anthropology or some such remote topic and at intervals Robbie interjected: "Stop it, I say, stop it!"

Finally, Gregory took us in his canoe with an outboard motor—we have ordered one, too, and when it comes we will be free citizens of the Sepik world, at least to the extent of two canoe loads of supplies—exploring on the upper Sepik to find a new tribe. Robbie had persuaded us to have our stores brought to Ambunti because he wanted us to do the Washkuk, a mountain people who live on the site of the finest view

in this part of New Guinea. They have had a pretty nasty time from government because they murdered a couple of police-boys who had been interfering with their women. Robbie wanted us to go and make it all up to them with loving kindness and beads and knives. So we went to see them.

We had to stay in a Sepik village, Jambon, overnight, where the people are sulky and seemed quite mad, for they kept us awake all night with ridiculous precautions against some kind of attack, which they said was supernatural. We thought it might be natural, but it was only a disordered figment of their own minds—a sort of group anxiety because a police-boy had once been killed there by a neighboring head-hunter. They were so sulky that I decided not to entrust myself to their carrying and walked up the Washkuk hills barefoot and without mishap. So now I am emancipated; I can walk everywhere and get brown and freckled in the sun, and I feel as if I had been let out of jail.

The Washkuks are sweet and gentle and proud and so simple as to be a little silly; they speak a gender language and live scattered in a hopeless fashion all about their nice mountain. We decided it was too much like Alitoea and bid them goodbye—to their great relief for they wanted to go hunting for weeks and weeks and were afraid we would be a great nuisance. So we made a good collection and then came down to Kankanamun, Gregory's village, on the *Osprey*. We stayed there through a *singsing*, and then Gregory brought us to Tchambuli in his canoe. All our stores came last week.

Here we are on a lovely lake, not quite black but crowded with lotuses. The people are gentle and polite and slip between one's fingers. They have some of the complexity of the Big Sepik, but they speak a gender language again and it is probably all a veneer. There are about 400 of them within an hour's walk of each other, they have some thirteen House Tambarans and we've already seen a big feast.

The three localities are so jealous of each other that the only way to get a house built was to have two built, and so now we have two houses which they are completing in their own good time, but strictly in step. And the next dilemma is which one to live in. One has the better view, but the other more adjacent usable buildings; one has the higher roof, the other the straighter floor. And we have told them that when there is



Tchambuli women fish on the lake near beds of lotuses and water lilies.

a big feast in one half we will live there, and vice versa. Meanwhile each hamlet sends spies to the other so that the work will keep abreast, and I fret and fret over the delay at really getting organized and settled.

But it is really a beautiful place, by far the most beautiful in which we have ever been. We can go swimming in the lake or canoeing on the lake; the roads are not so rough but that I can walk over them easily even at night; the people are in many ways like the Samoans, and therefore most intelligible to me and very attractive. It's fun being able to compare our material with Gregory's as we go along and to check up on the probable meanings of things. Our boys are hard at work fencing a vegetable garden and tomorrow I shall have my seeds all planted and some day not so far distant we will have lettuces and radishes. We have fresh fish every day and a constant supply of cold duck for quick meals during intervals in ceremonies. Altogether it is an excellent spot and we think we will like it very well.

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Tchambuli men go to a ceremony in canoes; Reo Fortune in the middle.

From a letter to William Fielding Ogburn
Tchambuli
February 27, 1933

I can't find any carbon, so I don't know whether I told you that the Mundugumor proved a most perfect study in the pathology of incest: a people with an exceedingly elaborate and unstable class system, which had broken down in different ways in different villages. The theory that the only way to get a wife was to trade an own sister for a wife produced the situation between brothers and between father and son which would obtain in the case of true incest if there were an uneven number of brothers and sisters in the family or if the father entered the arena for the daughters.

Reo has been very much interested in the sociology of incest for some time and this was heaven-sent material ready to his hand. Freud's great emphasis upon the son's love for his mother is, I think, the wrong

taking-off point for an understanding of society, as it belongs primarily to a period when the son is socially weak and non-significant. But the father's desire for his daughter and the brother's for his sister can be very powerful social factors as the men are old enough to enforce their demands. When the old man of a household in Mundugumor is planning to rob his son—that is, by trading a daughter for a young wife for himself, instead of letting his son exchange his sister for a wife—the father picks a quarrel with his son and ejects him from the household if possible. The psychology of fighting for one's sister, as a way of assuring oneself a wife, is engendered very young. One sees the spectacle of seven-year-old boys standing up and bitterly demanding that the *back* for their fifteen-year-old sisters be given to them, not taken by a father or a half-brother.

All this is played into by a fantastic system of descent according to which the boy belongs to the line of his mother, mother's father, mother's father's mother, etc., and the girl to her father, father's mother, father's mother's father's line—straight alternating sex descent lines, which have totems of their own. All the girls in a polygamous family belong to their father, take his kinship terms, etc., while the sons are split off both from the father and from their half-brothers, who belong to different lines. It was all very good stuff.

Now in Tchambuli we have the opposite kind of society, one which knows all about euphoria and all the rules for avoiding conflict. Dual organization and cross-cousin marriage, and the two wives of a man always come from the same clan, if possible, which means there are not two opposed kin groups back of half-brothers. I am beginning to think that something interesting may come up in the way of a correlation between a sense of distance towards affinal relatives, with its accompanying avoidance and jesting relationships, and a sense of respect towards blood relatives, which goes with only diffuse, happy jesting and no strains which provoke jesting relationships. But this is only a hunch at present. These Tchambuli people belong to the simpler New Guinea stratum again, the more Australoid type, with another gender language. They are primarily too happy to let themselves be dragooned by their culture into heavy tragedy attitudes.



Mother and child.

We are in a lovely place here, on a big lake sprinkled with pink and white lotuses. A lovely little island has just blown across the horizon and paused in front of our house in the space of time it took to write this letter. The Tchambuli are a people who have been harried for half a century or more by the more warlike Sepiks. Now with government control, they are back enjoying their ancestral lands and working like bees to build up their damaged culture. It's a hint that the underdog in primitive times is the one to study once government control comes in. These people have been under control for about five years. Mundugumor were hurling spears at every passing pinnacle three years ago, but as they were top dog on the Yuat River, they are now so bored with peace that they do nothing at all but enjoy their ill-gotten wives.

From a letter to Clark Wissler
Tchambuli
March 26, 1933

We have settled in one of the lake cultures on Tchambuli lake, adjacent to the middle Sepik culture (Iatmul). This Tchambuli culture presents a complex picture as a gender language is again spoken and many traits distinguish the people from the middle Sepik culture at present, but there are also many traits in common. In some respects they line up with the Mundugumor people, of whom we made a survey study last autumn, who in turn have some traits in common with Thurnwald's Banaro. This whole south bank of the Sepik has a definitely different cultural emphasis from that of the north bank, of which the Arapesh were representative.

We are working here in close touch with Mr. Bateson, who has already spent a year and a half in the middle Sepik. This makes accurate comparative work possible, and it looks as if the Sepik valley would become one of those areas in which delicate cultural comparisons can be made because a number of adjacent tribes have been studied thoroughly. The kinship systems, the personification of supernaturals, which inhabit water holes and are embodied in flutes, and many aspects of material culture show important similarities throughout this whole area. Its genius may be characterized as a fundamental inability to stick to fixed forms, a continual tendency to humanize rather drastic cultural relations, sometimes to humanize them so far that all form is lost and chaos results. The south bank has tended to develop fixed marriage forms and tentative class systems, which have in turn been rather knocked about by human motivations. In contrast, the north bank, as represented by the Arapesh and their border peoples, have relied upon developing temperamental attitudes rather than cultural forms; these temperamental attitudes have successfully resisted and revamped the less agreeable aspects of culture imported from the south bank. This is, you will understand, a schematic statement of a very complicated state of affairs, many details of which have yet to be worked out, but it will give you some idea of the type of problem which faces us.

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The Sepik valley is perhaps the richest in material culture in New Guinea proper. I have already completed a collection from the Yuat tributary (Mundugumor) and the grass country between the Yuat and the Keram. The Yuat art is individualized strongly, although it was probably only made possible by the complex and definite stylistic development of the whole Sepik valley.

Tchambuli lake is another important center of Sepik art.

The collections labeled "Sepik River" in the collection of the Museum come from some seven or eight local centers; only a small part of them, the conspicuous wood work, comes from the middle Sepik itself, which is primarily an important trading culture enforcing its economic needs by superior numbers and fighting ability. So I shall be in a position to make a collection and record techniques and art conventions from one of the exporting and manufacturing centers.

The Tchambuli tribe is what Rivers described as a "closed group"—some 550 people speaking a language which is not understood elsewhere and leading a self-sufficient social life. For their trade connections they depend upon the medium of the middle Sepik trade jargon. Fifteen men's houses, each the center of a local patrilineal group, are scattered in a continuous line along the foot of a mountain. The gardens—in the wet season—and the dwelling houses are located back of the men's houses on the mountainside. For large ceremonies the whole group acts as a unit; for smaller ceremonies there are three hamlets which keep their more private affairs within their own limits. Although they are a fishing, canoe people, they were inferior in fighting force to the middle Sepik, and about ten years ago were so badly worsted in raids that they scattered into the more distant mountain regions. With the coming of government control and the prohibition of headhunting, the Tchambuli came back to their old village site, evicted the middle Sepik squatters and began rebuilding their culture. Everything that they possessed had been destroyed or rifled—their ceremonial stools, their big slit gongs, and so on, had been carried off to the middle Sepik. (For old Tchambuli things I am fortunate in having Bateson's cooperation as he is gradually buying these up from the looting villages, which value them but slightly.)

For these special reasons Tchambuli presents a particularly inter-

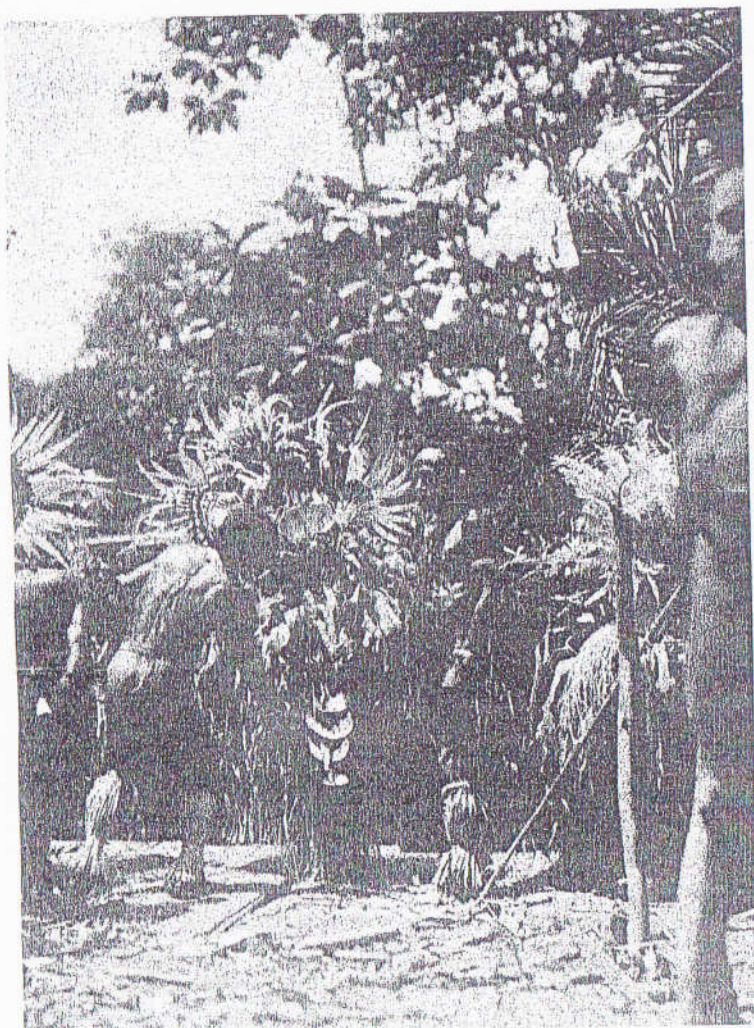
esting culture. While the prohibition on headhunting discouraged and depressed the conquering peoples like the Iatmul and the Mundugumor, it has given a new lease on life to the harried victims of the more warlike tribes. While this particular new stimulus to Tchambuli life occurred under white control, it is, I think, quite reasonable to suppose that similar conditions occurred in aboriginal days, when the attention of the conquering peoples was temporarily diverted by enemies on another border. In any event, the culture is in a fine state of activity—the Tchambuli are building elaborate men's houses, dwelling houses, working and validating canoes, initiating children and manufacturing ceremonial and useful objects with which to replace the theft and destruction wrought by the enemy.

As the hamlets extend quite a distance—it takes about an hour to walk from one end to the other—we have an organized scout system of selected youths from each men's house who come and report on all events of interest, receiving a safety razor blade for each report. Work is further complicated at present by high water, so that all the better roads are under water and canoe transport is necessary. We expect an outboard motor—to be fitted to a large canoe—at any moment, which will make it more practicable to follow the people on trading expeditions, pig hunts, and so on, and also to arrive promptly on the scene when an event occurs.

When our outboard motor arrives we shall be able to make collecting expeditions to neighboring cultures, also. At present with the river rising steadily, the mosquitoes are very bad and traveling about is highly undesirable. All sedentary work, either writing up or with informants, has to be done inside a net or in the mosquito room. It is necessary to postpone any work with the children until the mosquitoes are less numerous, as work with a group of active children is practically impossible inside a fragile net on a canvas floor.

As you will judge from this account, I am very well satisfied with this location and, indeed, regard the working conditions as the most favorable we have encountered since Manus. The size and relative compactness of the group, the easy water transportation, the absence of a boys' food problem, our housing conditions and the number of available informants are all excellent. Events move at such a pace that even

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Dancing women honor male masked figures.



Accompanying masked dancers to *mwai* ceremony.

two of us are sometimes unequal to coping with all of it and there are many days when we have to snatch meals at the most unlikely hours. Fresh fish forms a very welcome diet change after many months of birds and tins.

Like most of New Guinea, the men's houses and the religious cults make for a sharp division between men and women, and it is therefore ideal for a man and a woman to work together in this culture. The language is the most difficult one we have struck; it is also quite interesting as its multiple genders are in the process of breaking down in favor of a simpler, two-gender classification with living and non-living things as its basic categories.

This whole area, as I mentioned to you in letters last year, presents some striking likenesses to the Plains. In Tchambuli one of the con-

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spicuous parallels is the cross-cutting of blood groups by other types of social groups, either matrilineally or arbitrarily constituted. Although the Tchambuli are not as explicit as the Omaha in recognizing the way in which this variety of cross-cutting organizations makes for cementing social ties in a large group, the similarity in actual functioning is obvious.

part five

*Bali and Iatmul,
New Guinea,
1936-1939*

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